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THE SYLLABLES IN THE HEBREW LANGUAGE.

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It is not my purpose, at this place, to take part in the discussion on "Intermediate Syllables," commenced by Professor Dodd and Rabbi Felsenthal, but, rather, merely to show how the whole subject of syllables in Hebrew can be clearly put forth for the beginner, so that he may be sufficiently prepared for a real understanding of the various forms of the language. I hope that, through such a discussion of the various points that come into play in the matter of syllables in Hebrew, some light may also be thrown on what are called "Intermediate Syllables." It will be clear, from what follows, why I make use of the technical term "loosely-closed syllable" (*lose geschlossene Silbe*). Right here may I be permitted to call the attention of the reader to the term "opened syllables," which, so far as I know, is a new term. For the purpose of getting a better general view of the subject, I have almost entirely omitted all mention of exceptions. The majority of exceptions are to be explained on the basis of euphony (לְתַפְאֶרֶת הַקְרִיָּאָה, as the Jewish grammarians say); because the sacred writings of the Old Testament were, and still are, chanted in solemn rhythm in the synagogues. I wish to add, further, that the following explanation is not contained in my Hebrew grammar,¹ and is, thus, an important addition to it.

§ A. BEGINNING OF SYLLABLES.—Every syllable, and hence, also, every word, *must begin with a consonant*, that is,

(a) Neither with a vowel (an exception is found only in ו conjunctive, *e. g.*, וְדָבַר . . . וּבֵית . . . וּמִלָּךְ);

NOTE.—Before labials, the Babylonian system of punctuation has וּ, *i. e.*, וּ.

§ B. Nor with two consonants. When the first letter of a syllable (or of a word) has no vowel of its own, then it receives sh'wâ mobile (cf. my grammar, § 5, b), and, in the case of אֵהָהּ, Hāṭēph (§ 5, c; § 10, a, 3).

§ C. CLOSE OF SYLLABLES.—Here we distinguish

I. *Open Syllables*, *i. e.*, syllables closing with a vowel, *e. g.*, אֵשִׁית . . . קִימוּ, אָנוּ שָׁנָה . . . אָנוּ (on הָ cf. § 2, b). These syllables always have long vowels.

¹ Hebraeische Grammatik; mit Übungsstücken, Literatur und Vokabular. Zum Selbststudium und fuer den Unterricht. Von Hermann L. Strack. Karlsruhe und Leipzig: H. Reuter. New York: B. Westermann & Co. Chicago: American Publication Society of Hebrew. xvi., 163 pp. 2 Mark 70 pf.

Exceptions are found in the verbal suffixes (§ 76, e) **נִי** (ānî), in which the liquid can be regarded as virtually doubled.

NOTE.—Syllables closing with **ס** are considered open, e. g., **קֵטֶל**, but **מִצָּצָה** (cf. § 10, e, 1).

§ D. Unaccented syllables, with long vowels, are open; the sh'wâ following them is the sh'wâ mobile, e. g., **שְׁמֵרִים** shô-m'rîm.

§ E. II. *Closed Syllables*, i. e., those ending in a consonant, e. g., **קֶטֶל** (second syllable). They are called doubly closed, when the consonant closing the syllable is followed by another consonant in the same word, e. g., **מִצָּה** (first syllable), **קֵטֶלָה** (second syllable). When the two consonants are the same, i. e., when the vowel is followed by a consonant with a dāghēsh, this syllable is also called sharpened, e. g., **הִשְׁשִׁי** (first and second syllables).

§ F. Unaccented closed syllables always have short vowels, e. g., **מִבְּדִיל** (first syllable), **יִלֵּד** (first), **וַיָּקָם** wāyyāqōm (first, third), **וַיָּמַת** (first, third).

§ G. Unaccented syllables with short vowels are closed, e. g., **קֵטֶל־תָּם** (first).

§ H. In closed Penultima with tone, we find only the following vowels: (1) the tone-long vowels ā, ē, ō; hence neither î nor û, nor the vowels naturally long, or long by contraction, namely, â, ê, ô; (2) the short vowels ă, ě, e. g., **בְּמִנּוּ . . קֵטֶלָה**.

§ I. In closed Ultima with tone, any long vowel may occur; of the short vowels, sometimes the ĩ, e. g., the two particles **אִם** (if), **עִם** (with), which, however, often (as is always done in the case of **מִן**) becomes toneless when māqqup̄h is used, and the form **וַיִּשָּׁב** (§ 72, n, a).

Especially worthy of note are

§ K. III. *The Opened Syllables*, i. e., syllables which really close doubly, but in which this is avoided by means of a helping-vowel.

(1) *At the end of words.* An ordinary helping-vowel (exceptions, § 11, i), generally S'ghôl, but also (especially if the last, or next to the last syllable, is a guttural) Pättāh. Then the vowel of the open syllable, if with tone, generally is lengthened, namely, ō to ō̄, as, e. g., **קֹדֶשׁ . . רֹחַב . . אֶרֶח**, for qōd̄hsh, rōḥb, ōrḥ; ĩ to ē, e. g., **סֶפֶר . . שִׁמְעֵ**, for šĭphr, šĭm'ē; ă to ě, e. g., **מֶלֶךְ . . זֶרַע**, for māl̄k, zār' (cf. § 27, c, d).

§ L. If the next to the last letter is a guttural, then ă remains unchanged in the open syllable, e. g., **נָעַר** (§ 27, e), **דַּעַת . . תּוֹכַחַת** (§ 35, a), **וַיַּעַל** (§ 72, n, e), hence short vowel.

§ M. In the apocopated imperfect of the verbs **לִי**, the lengthening of ĩ to ē frequently does not take place, e. g., **יָגַל** for yĭgl, **יִיבֵן** (cf. § 72, n, γ).

§ N. If the next to the last letter is ĩ, then Hîrēq is used as a helping-vowel, Pättāh is retained in open syllables, as, e. g., **עֵין** (§ 28, a); thus also in the suffix form **יְיָ**, e. g., **אֱלֹהֶיךָ**, "your (fem.) God;" as also in the dual ending **יְיָ**.

§ O. (2) *In the middle of words.* The first closing consonant, if it is a guttural, frequently, in order to ease the pronunciation, receives the hāṭēph corresponding to the preceding vowel; and, in this case, this vowel is not lengthened. Examples (in § 10, a, 4); **נָעַר**, to be divided **נָעַר־ו**, nā'ā-rô.

§ P. The vowel is also not lengthened, when, instead of the hāṭēph,

on account of a sh'wâ following it, the corresponding short vowel is employed (cf. § 5, e), e. g., יְחִזְקוּ, first plural יְחִזְקוּ, to be divided יְחִזְקוּ, yěhēz-qû; יְחַלְמוּ, first plural יְחַלְמוּ, to be divided יְחַלְמוּ.

§ Q. IV. *Loosely-closed Syllables* we call those which were originally followed by a vowel, which, however, in accordance with the laws of etymology, (§§ 11, c, 2, and 11, d) fell away. The "loose close" can be seen, from the fact that the letters בִּנְדַכְּ remain aspirated. The sh'wâ cannot be heard, and is *not* sh'wâ mobile. Examples (in § 11, c, 2), בִּנְה, dual, with suffix, בִּנְפִיהֶם, kăn-phê-hēm (§ 24, d), מַלְכִּים for mālākhīm, suffix מַלְכֵיהֶם (§ 27, g); חֲרַבְתִּיךָ, ḥōr-bhō-thāyīkh (§ 34, a). In § 11, d, e. g., יַעֲמַד, plural יַעֲמַדוּ, to be divided yā'ām-dhū (§ 63, e); נֶאֱסַף, plural נֶאֱסַפּוּ (§ 63, g); יַחֲרֹד, plural יַחֲרֹדוּ (§ 63, f).

§ R. Loosely closed are also those syllables which originated from the union of the prefixes בִּ. בְּ. לְ with words whose first consonant had a sh'wâ under it, e. g., לְדַבֵּר (§ 11, g, 2), from דַּבֵּר+לְ. Exceptions are found with לְ before the Inf. Qāl. (cf. § 53, c, where לְקַבֵּר, from קַבֵּר+לְ (לְ) is mentioned).

§ S. Very rarely is a loosely closed syllable found where no vowel has been omitted (cf. § 27, m), cf. also הַבִּיתָה (*accus. loci*), for which word, according to § 19, b, a, the ground-form, bāyt, is to be presupposed. A fixed closed syllable is found, contrary to the rule, in בְּרַכַּת (*stat. const.*), of בְּרַכָּה (§ 33, d), and in חֲרַפּוֹת (*stat. const.*), of חֲרַפּוֹת (§ 34, c), cf. also בְּשִׁפְכָךְ (§ 53, d).

METHODS IN HEBREW GRAMMARS.

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To understand and master a language implies more than the mere mechanical acquisition of its facts. It means the study of a language from a philological standpoint, an examination of its grammar and lexicon for the purpose of learning its inner character and being, and in order to be able to understand rationally and philosophically the phenomena of the speech. Whitney¹ says of the linguistic student: "He deals with language as the instrument of thought, its means of expression, not its record; he deals with simple words and phrases, not with sentences and texts. He aims to trace out the inner life of language, to discover its origin, to follow its successive steps of growth, and to deduce the laws that govern its mutations, the recognition of which shall account to him for both the unity and variety of its present manifested phases; and, along with this, to apprehend the nature of language as a human endowment, its relation to thought, its influence upon the development of intellect and the growth of knowledge, and the history of mind and of knowledge as reflected in it." Necessary as it is to acquire thoroughly and well the data of a language, and to learn these for practical purposes, it will be readily seen that the most interesting and, in many respects, most profitable problems of linguistic study reach out above and beyond these

¹ *Language and the study of Language*, p. 6.